

STATEMENT ON DRUG TRAFFICKING MADE BY DR. FIDEL CASTRO RUZ, PRESIDENT OF THE STATE COUNCIL OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA, AT THE CONMEMORATION OF JULY 26, 1999 IN CIENFUEGOS, CUBA [1]

Fecha:

26/07/1999

As you know, in June of 1989, our country was enmeshed in the bitter legal proceedings of Case No. 1, resulting from several comrades' irresponsible and inconceivable behavior. Some of them showed records of unquestionable revolutionary merits and achievements. Nonetheless, they placed at risk not only the prestige and the enormous moral authority acquired over decades of heroic struggle by institutions as vital for the Revolution as the Revolutionary Armed Forces and the Ministry of Interior, but also the very security of the country. This was an unprecedented occurrence. The media covered the fully transparent public trial. Never before had a trial received so much publicity. The Council of State itself debated the appeal before the television cameras that broadcast the event to the country and the world. The viewpoints and rational of its 29 members were expressed. The agreement was unanimous. It had to be an exemplary sanction, and it was.

The situation created by the constant violations of Cuban airspace was analyzed during the trial. The three air corridors that cross over our long and narrow country are used daily by an average of 277 aircraft operated by regular airlines or other aircraft currently authorized when they comply with the prior request procedure. However, there were frequent irregular flights, at low and medium altitudes, with no prior notice or authorization whatsoever. This was precisely the way the drug traffickers' aircraft operated.

As a rule, they disobeyed any order issued by the air traffic authorities and avoided intercepting planes, even in broad daylight, using widely known wing movements in the few minutes needed to cross over the island from South to North. Once on the sea, they dropped their poisonous drug packages within or outside the 12 miles jurisdictional waters. A strong warning was called for.

On June 24, 1989, the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (MINFAR) issued a note on the subject of the country's air corridors announcing the decision to shoot at any plane that illegally entered our airspace and refused to obey orders to land for an inspection.

On June 25, the head of the United States Interests Section (USIS) in Havana presented to the Cuban Foreign Ministry a note in the form of a Non Paper. There it was stated that the US government would gladly welcome any legitimate action by the Cuban government to prevent drug trafficking within Cuba's national territory, jurisdictional waters and airspace. At the same time, it expressed concern over the decision to shoot at aircraft given the possibility of anyone failing to respond to our orders due to errors, a lack of communication or some other difficulty. They asked for moderation.

On June 25, the US Federal Aviation Administration sent a message to the Cuban Civil Aviation Agency expressing concern over the policy announced the previous day of shooting at suspicious aircraft that did not comply with orders to land.

On June 26, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher, while welcoming any legitimate action to

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prevent drug trafficking, called on the Cuban government to take the necessary precautions and exercise proper moderation to avoid the loss of innocent lives.

On June 27, the Foreign Ministry presented to the USIS Note 1268 in which it reiterated Cuba's firm determination to step up all possible measures to fight drug trafficking in the environs of Cuban territory, including strict observance of international over-flight regulations in accordance with Cuba's responsibility for its airspace.

On June 28, President Bush declared to El Nuevo Herald that he considered it a right decision by the Cuban government to bring officials linked to drug trafficking to trial.

In the end, the order could not be fulfilled, not even to set an example. The reason is that even in daylight, the time it takes to detect a violation by radar and transmit the information to an air base from which an intercepting plane would then take off and be guided towards the far-off point where a small target is moving, locate it with its own radar, report what it sees and wait for orders is longer than the time it takes the violator to cross the narrow national territory and enter international waters.

Additionally, to avoid risks drug smugglers usually fly by night at low altitudes, even over irregular terrain. The hundreds of thousands of dollars they are paid for each flight make them practically suicidal. Our Air Force has lost fighter planes and even lives while tracking aircraft to intercept such violations. An intensive and permanent guard service, day and night, would be ruinous; also, it would impose a tremendous drain on manpower and equipment in peacetime. Besides, under the circumstances there was a genuine risk of shooting down a plane of adventurers uninvolved in drug trafficking.

On the other hand, the United States has technically equipped aircraft with excellent communications specially designed to track down and chase planes over international waters and throughout the width and breadth of its immense territory, should they enter it, until the target either drops its cargo or runs out of fuel and is forced to land.

The intrigues would soon begin.

In July 11, the head of the USIS was summoned by the Cuban Foreign Ministry (MINREX) to receive the Note 1376, which disputed statements made by US officials on alleged drug drops on Cuban territorial waters that were not intercepted by Cuban forces. The Note specified the details of the drops on July 7 and 8 and the efforts made by our forces to locate and control them. The Note further stated that unless the United States adopted a serious and constructive stance it would not be possible to establish a sincere and effective cooperation. Likewise, it reiterated that Cuba was willing to cooperate and waiting for concrete US government proposals.

- On July 20, the press reported that four senators had sent a letter to the Commander-in- Chief requesting information on the Ochoa case.

- On July 24, Defense Secretary Richard Cheney declared that what was happening in Cuba was more than a fight against corruption and drug trafficking.

- On July 25 and 26, hearings were held by the House Working Group on International Drug Control and the Senate Subcommittee on Terrorism, Drugs and International Operations. The US Administration official at the hearings noted that Cuba had been asked for the results of the investigation and reiterated several times that the US government was interested in putting Cuba to the test on these matters.

- On July 26, Deputy Foreign Minister Ricardo Alarcón denied that the United States had provided Cuba with any information over the previous 18 months concerning Cuban government officials' involvement in drug trafficking.

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- On August 2, at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings Attorney General Richard Thornburgh expressed doubts on the possibility of cooperation with Cuba in fighting drug trafficking. He also said that Cuba had ignored Washington's efforts to establish cooperation.
- Also on August 2, Vice President Dan Quayle said he was intrigued by the announcement made by the Commander-in-Chief that strict measures would be adopted against drug trafficking.
- The August 7 edition of Granma included an editorial which denounced the slandering campaign unleashed by the United States on Cuba's alleged involvement in drug trafficking. The editorial explicitly described Cuba's stance and its offer to cooperate with the United States in these matters.
- On August 17, at a Judicial Affairs Senate Committee hearing a testifying Colombian drug smuggler tried to link Cuba to his illegal activities.
- On September 1, the Note 1694 was delivered to the USIS in response to its Note 357 requesting cooperation in the arrest and expulsion of 12 Colombian drug smugglers wanted in the United States. In our Note, we expressed our acknowledgement of and gratitude for the information passed on to us and reiterated that Cuba would never provide refuge to drug smugglers and would consequently be on the alert. The Note reiterated again Cuba's willingness to join efforts with the hemispheric community in the fight against drug trafficking.

As you see, we are talking about something that happened in 1989. Nonetheless, the various US administrations have never acceded to considering a cooperation agreement between the two countries to fight drug trafficking. Since then, however, Cuba has signed fruitful agreements on the matter with 23 important countries in Latin America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia and it cooperates with drug control agencies of 13 other countries with which agreements have yet to be signed.

Ten years later, on May 25, 1999, The Washington Post, a publication not usually friendly but rather critical of the Cuban Revolution published two articles on Cuba's efforts to fight drug trafficking signed by journalist Douglas Farah. The first article carries the heading "Cuba Wages a Lonesome Drug War" and the subheading "Congressional Stance Hampers US Role". It reads as follows:

"CAYO CONFITES, Cuba -- On this sandy speck of land off the northern coast of Cuba, the only line of defense against Colombian drug traffickers bound for the United States consists of an aging Soviet-era patrol boat, a British radar system with a six-mile range and 15 Cuban soldiers.

"`We are seeing a systematic increase in the amount of drugs dropped by air here, then picked up by fast boats and taken out of our waters," said Col. Fredy Curbelo, an Interior Ministry official who recently accompanied an American reporter on an unprecedented tour of counter-drug installations in Communist-ruled Cuba. "Our Soviet launches are 20 years old and can go 27 knots, while the drug traffickers can easily go at 45 knots. We are doing what we can with our resources, but we are limited in what we can do.'

"Notwithstanding Cuba's dire economic problems, which were exacerbated after the collapse of its Soviet patron in 1989, the government of President Fidel Castro is mounting what counter-drug experts in Europe and the United States say is a serious if underfunded effort to block the flow of illegal drugs through Cuba.

"Castro's program has so impressed US law enforcement officials that they would like to cooperate further with their Cuban counterparts, who already have provided discreet assistance in several major cases. There's just one problem: Some members of Congress, with backing from many Cuban Americans, are dead set against any cooperation between Havana and Washington, which have not had diplomatic relations since 1961.

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"`From our point of view, the policy makes no sense,' said a senior US law enforcement official. `We can't close off the Caribbean [from drug traffic] without dealing with Cuba, and they have shown a willingness to cooperate with us by acting on all the information we pass on to them. It is a major hole that needs to be plugged.'

"Just 90 miles from Florida, Cuba is an ideal transshipment point for illegal drugs bound for the United States, according to US law enforcement officials, who estimate that about 30 percent of the cocaine reaching the United States from Colombia passes through the Caribbean. Yet for now, counter-drug cooperation is limited to information exchanged on a case-by-case basis between the US Coast Guard and Cuba's border guards via fax or an antiquated telex system.

"In contrast, counter-drug cooperation between Cuba and such US allies as Britain, Spain, Colombia and France is growing. Cuban officials said they would welcome increased cooperation with the United States in fighting drug traffickers even in the absence of any progress toward lifting the US economic embargo against the island nation.

"`You would think that if there were any area in which we could work together, this would be it,' said Ricardo Alarcón, president of Cuba's legislative assembly and the government's point man on relations with the United States. `It shows a lack of will by the United States. Both sides would benefit from broader, systematic cooperation.'

"Earlier this month," --he means the month of May-- "Barry R. McCaffrey, the Clinton administration's director of national drug control policy, said the United States `probably ought to be willing to encourage' dialogue with Cuban authorities on counter-drug cooperation. But McCaffrey has been under attack by Cuban American lawmakers and their allies in Congress, who have long contended that Castro's government is not fighting drug smugglers but assisting them.

"In a December 30, 1998 letter, House Republicans Lincoln Díaz-Balart (Florida), Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (Florida) and Dan Burton (Indiana) demanded that McCaffrey address `the issue of the Cuban government's participation in narcotrafficking and take all necessary actions to end the Clinton administration's cover-up of that reality.'

"In an angry response on January 28, McCaffrey, a retired army general, said he was `insulted' by the tone of the letter, `categorically' denied a cover-up, and said there is `no conclusive evidence to indicate that Cuban leadership is currently involved in this criminal activity.'

"Despite McCaffrey's comments and pleas from the Justice Department, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Coast Guard, there are no plans to improve the level of counter-drug cooperation between the two countries, senior Clinton administration officials said. They added, however, that in the absence of a formal agreement, the two countries could continue to cooperate on a case-by-case basis. Anything more ambitious, they said, would generate a political backlash in Congress and jeopardize the informal channels between law enforcement agencies in Cuba and the United States.

"`We are not saying we are not prepared to do more with them at some point... but right now there is nothing being considered,' said one administration official.

"With 42,000 square miles of territorial waters and 4,195 islands and small keys, Cuba is a smuggler's paradise," the journalist says. "Most of the cocaine shipped through Cuba is dropped by low-flying aircraft near uninhabited keys, where it is retrieved by traffickers in speedboats. Those boats then ferry it to larger ships en route to the United States or other destinations, such as Mexico, Haiti and Jamaica.

"David Ridgway, the British ambassador to Havana, described anti-drug cooperation between his country and Cuba --including \$400,000 a year for training provided by Britain-- as `first class.' Cuba's `political commitment is very strong,' he said in an interview in Havana. `We are satisfied our money is well spent', said the Ambassador, according to the journalist.

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"Thanks to British aid, airport immigration officials can now run computer profiles of passengers to determine which ones are likely to be involved in drug trafficking. Since 1994, when a Cuban tourism boom began, 215 foreigners have been arrested on drug-trafficking charges. Drug-sniffing dogs trained in France check luggage.

"Anti-drug efforts are also focused on Cuba's new free-trade zones, through which most goods are shipped without being inspected, making them favorites of drug traffickers. Last December 3, for example, Colombian police seized 7.7 tons of cocaine in Cartagena, Colombia that was bound for Spain by way of Havana. Cuban and Colombian authorities determined that the route had been used at least three times before it was discovered.

"Cuban authorities say they are motivated by a desire to keep drug use from gaining a foothold on the island. For decades after Castro's 1959 revolution, illegal drugs were virtually unknown in Cuba. But in recent years, as the tourism boom has brought in outside influences and US dollars, marijuana, cocaine and crack cocaine have begun to infiltrate the island, authorities said.

"According to the Interior Ministry, Cuban authorities discovered 30 loads of cocaine washed up on shore last year --compared with 12 in 1994-- because traffickers missed their rendezvous points or intentionally dumped their cargoes to avoid arrest. Authorities recovered 68 such loads in the first three months of this year.

"In a speech on January 5, Castro acknowledged that drug trafficking is a growing problem, reported that 1,216 people are in prison on drug-related charges and complained that some people had been hiding drugs that wash ashore instead of turning them over to the police."

The second article by the same journalist was published by the same newspaper in the US capital under the heading "In This Case, Cuba-US Teamwork Netted Big Score."

"HAVANA -- On October 1, 1996, US Coast Guard officers watched in frustration as the Honduras-registered freighter Limerick --sinking, abandoned and carrying a large quantity of cocaine-- drifted into Cuban waters and seemingly out of their reach.

"Alerted by a Coast Guard request relayed through British diplomatic channels, Cuban authorities hauled the ship to shore and with help from US law enforcement agents" --whom we actually invited-- "discovered the hidden cargo, which they turned over to US authorities for use in the trial of the ship's captain and crew. Cuban border guards even flew to Miami to testify.

"`They were really very cooperative,' said James Milford, who was the DEA's deputy director at the time. `Any way you look at it, they deserve a lot of credit.'

"The United States continues to bar most trade with Cuba, and the countries have not had diplomatic relations since 1961. But law enforcement officials in both countries say the unprecedented level of cooperation in the Limerick case shows political differences can be set aside in pursuit of a common goal.

"The case began when the Coast Guard, acting on an intelligence tip, stopped the freighter in international waters north of Cuba on suspicion that it was carrying two tons of cocaine." It should actually say south of Cuba, southeastern Cuba but that is how the article reads. "But as a Coast Guard party boarded the ship, the 11-man crew tried to scuttle it, forcing the Coast Guard to evacuate the crew and abandon the vessel.

"Using the British as intermediaries, the Coast Guard asked the Cuban border patrol to try to salvage the 220-foot ship, which had drifted into Cuban territory, was taking on water and was about to sink, according to US, British and Cuban officials. The Cubans agreed and towed the ship to shore.

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"Acting on US intelligence, Cuban authorities began dismantling the ship and discovered a hidden cache of about two tons of cocaine, according to Lt. Col. Oscar García, deputy commander of Cuba's anti-drug police. The United States subsequently passed along new intelligence indicating that even more cocaine might be concealed on the ship, whose voyage had originated in Barranquilla, Colombia.

"The Cubans agreed to let US Drug Enforcement Administration and Justice Department officials join them" --actually, we invited them to participate-- "in the first joint counter-drug operation between the two countries, according to US and Cuban officials.

"After spending two weeks dismantling the ship, investigators from the two countries discovered six more tons of cocaine, for a total haul of eight tons --one of the largest cocaine seizures in history." It was a bit less, as far as we recall, close to seven tons.

That is essentially what the two Washington Post articles reported.

It should also be said that the Limerick case was not the only one in which cooperation existed. Just a few weeks ago, Cuban cooperation led to the seizure of the China Breeze in the Caribbean. It was a vessel registered to the Babuch-Marín Inc. shipping company that transported four tons of cocaine at the moment.

On May 28, 1999, near Cayo Confites, north of Camagüey province, the Cuban Border Patrol seized a speedboat coming to pick up a drug shipment carried by a light plane forced to dump it outside the established rendezvous point after being chased by a Cuban Air Force craft. A total of 449 kilograms of cocaine were confiscated.

On May 31 --less than two months ago-- Cuban cooperation helped to capture the Castor motorboat on the high seas carrying four tons of cocaine.

As a result of our country's drug interdiction efforts, 693 foreign drug smugglers were arrested between 1970 and 1999. Then, from 1970 to 1990 --a shorter period of time-- that is twenty years, 30 aircraft and 73 seacrafts were confiscated; 84 of that total were registered in the United States. Moreover, Cuba has never been a drug producer or exporter. These are all drugs produced, exported and transported from other places.

In early June, barely two weeks after the Washington Post articles, I met with a renowned and prestigious US Republican lawmaker visiting Cuba. He impressed me as an experienced and serious man with whom one could engage in an in-depth and frank conversation. For the sake of discretion, I will rather not mention his name since I have not consulted him on my saying this and I do not want to mix him up in this debate. One of the main issues we addressed in our conversation was the drug trafficking. I will mention only a few essential points from notes on that conversation, although a great deal more was said about the subject.

When he asked me whether Cuba and the United States were presently working jointly in drug trafficking interdiction I answered: "There is modest cooperation." When asked about the reason I frankly said that for 40 years we had acted as the police in fighting drug trafficking in the Caribbean. That this was not because anyone wanted to bring drugs into Cuba but because for a long time we had had to defend ourselves from pirate attacks, the infiltration of men, weapons and explosives and from aircraft violating our airspace to drop bombs, flammable products, weaponry or biological substances.

Whenever we could, I said, we forced them to land. For many years in those days the pilots obeyed such orders. I do not remember that we ever shot any of them down. But when the drug smugglers realized that if they refused to obey no one shot at them, they stopped obeying. When at times they had to land because of technical problems, we seized them. That was how we intercepted many planes and especially many boats trafficking with drugs. The crew was automatically arrested and brought to

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justice in Cuba; no exceptions were made.

I explained to him the events tried in Case No. 1 that had been considered an act of treason because several of those involved were high ranking officers in the Ministry of Interior and one of them was an outstanding military officer highly decorated for his war merits. Yet, they had taken part in the organization of drug trafficking through our country, an extremely serious offense that jeopardized the prestige and security of the nation.

I explained that we had found their justification incredible since they said that they had concocted the plan to help the country. They received 1000 dollars for every kilogram of drugs allowed crossing. It was stupid to think or believe, in Cuba or abroad, that a country importing eight billion dollars worth of goods a year could solve any of its problems by collecting 1000 dollars for every kilogram of drugs that crossed its territory. They helped in smuggling a total of about four tons of drugs in two years before they were found out.

I told the visitor that even if drug smugglers had delivered a billion or five billion dollars, if they had paid Cuba's foreign debt, the Revolution would never accept the passage of even a kilogram of drugs (APPLAUSE) because our country is worth much more. What it has achieved in health, education and many other fields as a matter of sheer justice with the sacrifice of many lives is worth much more than that amount; that the life of just one person is worth much more, (APPLAUSE) and we had had to sacrifice many lives.

I said to him that the most elementary logic indicated that only a government of thieves and cretins would be a part of such business. Also that if we were a government of thieves we would not need drugs to obtain wealth, as others have done elsewhere in different times. But, surely a government like that would have been ousted long ago because our revolutionary, learned and conscientious people would neither support it nor tolerate it. (APPLAUSE) I added that no country was in a better position than Cuba to fight drugs within our waters and our borders.

I spoke to him about the boat we salvaged and seized three years ago off the southeastern coast of Cuba. It was sinking because it had been boarded by a US Coast Guard party that later abandoned it. The crew had opened up the valves to scuttle the boat and prevent the seizure of the cargo and the evidence but it drifted into Cuban waters and our Coastal patrol salvaged it. Almost seven tons of highly pure cocaine was found on board. We informed the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency and requested that they take part in the search. Everything was done quietly and all the drugs and papers were handed over to them. They had said they would need them as evidence in the coming trial.

I explained that we cooperated in drug interdiction as much I we could, the same we do in the cases of alien smuggling but that the United States, for strictly political reasons, had eluded establishing any agreements for a systematic and serious cooperation project. I added that given the way drug smugglers operated, by air or by sea, it was very difficult to intercept a small plane by day or by night and force it to land if it refused to do so.

I said that drugs were dropped at a distance of 5 to 20 miles off Cuban coasts. That some years ago, if they washed up on the keys or the island people handed them over voluntarily; there were no dollars here then. Now, much persuasion and organizational effort is required to obtain the people's cooperation. Sanctions against domestic trafficking had to be tightened because a domestic market was emerging.

I also explained to him what had happened with two purported Spanish businessmen. These people had established a joint venture and operated a factory here. But, their real purpose --as would later be discovered-- was to send drugs to Europe through Cuba by stuffing them into the walls of containers where they imported raw materials from Colombia and sent the manufactured products to Spain. I said to him that, in the face of such deception and the risk of serious damage to the country, we were compelled to establish the most severe sanctions for large-scale drug trafficking through our country.

Allow me a digression now in this account of the events.

Actually, these two "businessmen" could have been arrested if only the Colombian authorities --in compliance with existing agreements-- had informed us about the drugs that had been seized in Colombia found hidden in the walls of several containers belonging to the alleged businessmen. They simply made this information public in December.

If they had only coordinated with us, those two could have easily been arrested. But instead they made this public announcement, adding that the containers were bound for Cuba. It was an incomplete, confusing and odd report, which I analyzed also publicly on January 5, just a few days later. I was most upset that they were talking about drugs bound for Cuba and seized in Colombia as if they were talking about just any commodity imported by the country on a regular basis. I protested that way of handling things.

The result is that those guys are still at large in Spain. They were arrested in January and held for a few days then set free because there was no evidence against them, according to that country's authorities, to which we have offered all the necessary cooperation. In Colombia, only the man in custody of the drugs was arrested.

They was a public response to my January 5 statement where those two individuals claimed their innocence and argued that it was all a fabrication aimed at seizing their little factory. It was just that, a cheap little factory with which they had deceived some of our people and betrayed the good faith of a Cuban entity because they had proposed an investment, a joint venture to supply the technology and market for the ornamental objects produced.

These gentlemen on whose deeds there is irrefutable evidence should have been arrested and detained in Spain, in Europe or wherever they try to hide. If there are people serving dozens of years in prison for less serious crimes, why are these two gentlemen freely travelling in Europe?

Now, I shall continue with the story of my conversation with the American lawmaker.

After I told him about the attempt at large-scale drug trafficking through Cuba by the two Spanish citizens, I also explained to him that there had been attempts at smaller scale trafficking. That recently a group of 18 people --British, Canadian and Jamaican citizens-- were arrested trying to introduce 50 kilograms of cocaine hidden in their overcoats, that they would be brought to justice and face the sanctions for small-scale trafficking, which have also been made more severe. They were somewhat lucky, since the amendments made a few months later by the National Assembly were not yet in force.

Finally, when he asked me if an anti-drug cooperation agreement between the United States and Cuba would be of much help, I told him that this island is more than 1200 kilometers long and has 5746 kilometers of coasts. Also, that I believed serious talks should be held between both countries on drug smuggling interdiction and that we wanted nothing in return, not even permission for American farmers to sell food to Cuba. That we worked on ethical principles and had done so for 40 years despite the U.S. blockade and that we did not even ask for the lifting of the blockade as a condition. I said that such an agreement would benefit the United States fifty times more than it would Cuba but that we would also benefit because the drugs that increasingly washed up on our coasts were harmful to us.

When he interrupted me to ask whether Cuba would allow the U.S. authorities to act in our waters or airspace, I categorically responded that it would not. I said that the United States would not accept Cuban naval or aircraft to enter its territorial waters or airspace, that such an agreement could only be reached on a reciprocal basis. I am convinced, said I, that it is ridiculous, truly ridiculous that the US government for fear of the Miami groups outcry has not signed an agreement with Cuba on drug trafficking interdiction when we were ready to do it for nothing, simply as an international moral duty.

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I clearly expressed to him that three possible forms of cooperation could be established: modest cooperation, larger and more effective cooperation or a comprehensive cooperation. That for the two first our own resources sufficed but for a highly effective comprehensive cooperation we needed some technical and communication means that were not within our reach, although we had all the skilled staff required.

In concluding I said more or less exactly the following: "Please, ask the highest authorities in your country what level of cooperation they want, whether the present level, a higher level or the highest level possible. I simply say that we are ready for any of those degrees of cooperation. Anyway, if they are not interested we will still continue to do what we are doing on our own because it is our duty to defend ourselves from the damage caused by drug trafficking; it is a national interest and an international duty as well. That was the end of that part of my conversation with him.

The Washington Post articles we already mentioned and the sensible statements made by some senior authorities, including renowned US lawmakers, caused some alarm among the counterrevolutionary mob in Miami and its Congressional allies whose electoral campaigns are funded by the Cuban-American National Foundation --a confirmed terrorist organization that in 1997 planned and funded attacks with powerful explosives on hotels in Havana.

If you consider the dates of these events --the Washington Post articles on May 25; then, in the first half of June a series of statements by officials, lawmakers, anti-drug authorities and others; and a bill promoting to negotiate an agreement with Cuba-- and what immediately followed, you can accurately outline and sketch the scheme quickly plotted and readily unleashed by the counterrevolutionary mob, its allies and lobbies working endlessly, round the clock, against Cuba, to thwart any anti-drug cooperation. It is crystal clear, as you will see.

On June 19, that is, almost a month after the two May 25 articles, a favorable climate was creating. Then, El Nuevo Herald, a newspaper that often serves the interests of that mob published an article by journalist Maria Travieso under the heading "Strong Rejection to Anti-Drug War with Cuba", which reads:

"The State Department's announcement that next Monday officials from the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and the Coast Guard service will visit Cuba to cooperate in the fight against drug trafficking caused hot reactions in the Cuban sectors of southern Florida.

"`The sending of these officials did not surprise me. It is consistent with the administration's policy of appeasement and collaboration with Castro's regime,' said Republican congressman for Florida Lincoln Diaz-Balart.

"Diaz-Balart, who received a direct call from the State Department informing him of the officials' trip to Cuba, was clearly very annoyed."

Look how the mechanism works and the fruits of the government timid and hesitant actions against the virulence and permanent blackmail by the anti-Cuban mob. They decide to send some officials to discuss these issues and then call the heads of the mob to humbly inform them that they are sending these people to Cuba. Of course, the outcry, the uproar, the insults and even the threats against the administration immediately began through all possible media and also the maneuvers to jeopardize such action.

"The federal official said that several weeks ago, when the U.S. government leaked information to the press on Castro's alleged support to the war against drugs, the beginning of what we will see on Monday took place'.

"He added that there is a major difference between these meetings and the usual review of agreements by both countries on migratory issues. 'They have already admitted' --this insolent says-- `that this is a matter of cooperation in an area where Castro has nothing to do, because he is one of the biggest drug

traffickers in the world,' Diaz-Balart said."

The article continues: "The Cuban-American National Foundation, through its chairman Alberto Hernández..." --who happens to be the owner of one of the two .50-caliber semi-automatic rifles they were planning to kill me with on Isla Margarita, with a telescopic sight, infrared rays, a 1400-meter range and the capacity to pierce an armored car at 400 meters or to shoot down a plane about to land or moving along a runway, and so on; the owner of one of them, I repeat, is this gentleman.

A boat, also owned by them, was seized in Puerto Rico. By mere chance, a Coast Guard cutter searching for drugs seized it and the powerful weapons were found. Before they realized what was happening, they were already in the hands of the Puerto Rican authorities. This happy owner of the gun "very legally" registered in his name and organizer of the attack continues to live completely free in the United States. He was not included in the trial even when he was the Foundation leader. Now, they have daddy's fair child there but, as always, the other remains at the top.

I continue with the article: "The Cuban-American National Foundation, through its chairman Alberto Hernández, reacted strongly to the announcement: 'This is simply outrageous. We will take our opposition wherever necessary. It is unacceptable for the Cuban community in exile and on the island,' he said." The only thing missing was a threat to kill the president of the United States or to shoot him with one of those guns bought there, that are so accurate and have such a long range.

"Other colleagues of Diaz-Balart supported his position. Florida Republican Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen described President Bill Clinton's government attitude as absurd. "This only goes to prove the desire of the Clinton's administration to cooperate with Fidel Castro's dictatorship. To say that his regime collaborates in the war on drugs is as absurd, illogical and incorrect as can be,' she commented."

On July 17, an EFE cable headed "Republican Members of Congress Propose Including Cuba in Drug Certification Process" read as follows:

"Two Republican leaders from the US House of Representatives have proposed including Cuba in the State Department's annual evaluation of countries cooperating in the fight against drug trafficking.

"Congressmen Dan Burton (Indiana)" --a well-known name, it does ring a bell, an off-key bell that has rung loudly in association with a genocidal law, in partnership with Helms; now the big shots come into action, representatives and senators associated with the mob-- "and Benjamin Gilman (New York), co-sponsors of the bill, consider that Cuba is one of the main countries involved in international drug trafficking.

"The legislation coincides with reports that the US government is readying to approve new measures to ease the economic embargo on Cuba.

"The State Department does not include Cuba in its evaluation of countries that cooperate with the United States in the anti-drugs fight due to its interpretation that the law does not apply to countries with which it does not engage in trade.

"Two State Department officials visited Havana last month to discuss possible cooperation projects including counter-drug trafficking operations.

"The House of Representatives began its investigation on Cuba and drug trafficking after Colombian police seized seven tons of cocaine on December last that was supposedly destined for a company in Havana."

See how these gentlemen dare to mix Cuba up in this vulgar affair. The United States and Europe have not even been capable of arresting such dangerous subjects. Let them be sent to Cuba to be tried by

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our courts in a public trial, with absolute and total transparency. There is no need to fear because, in the end, the sanctions later approved by the National Assembly were not yet in force. Let them be sent here and let us argue the case before the courts but, of course, they must be caught first.

Who is helping them so that they cannot be found? Their main crime they committed here where they set up their factory, betrayed the country's good faith and used our opening up to trade, to investments and tourism to try to turn our national territory into a transit point for drug trafficking. They put up a small factory here. It is unquestionably obvious that they had a deliberate intent to traffic in drugs on a large scale. They were already setting up other small financial businesses for loans and other activities.

Now let's see if they can hide in Europe and evade Interpol, which cannot be all that easy. They are well known individuals and must have quite a lot of money. Why have they not been caught? Or could it be that they were sent to set up a provocation against Cuba? What could the reason be? We are demanding that they be captured and sent to our country; that would be fitting. We have a priority right to bring them to trial. It was here that they put up their little factory; it was here that they brought the containers of raw materials secretly stuffed with drugs; it was here that they filled them with products from the factory and sent them to Spain; it was here that they committed their main crimes: bringing in the drugs, handling them, breaking the laws and deceiving the country.

Let them be sent here to be tried: that is our response and our challenge that cannot be eluded; and may lawyers come from all over the world, if they so wish, to defend them, to observe or to take part in the trial and confirm the truth. You can see the way things are twisted, all the tricks, the scheming, the slanders and lies.

I shall continue:

"At the time, however, the US State Department said that there were no links between the drug shipment and Cuban President Fidel Castro's government," concludes the EFE dispatch.

To tell the truth, the FBI, the CIA, the Administration and everybody there knows how things are here; they know it only too well. Of course, they are never concerned about the slanders against Cuba, about the many things that are said against Cuba; that over and over, infamous attempts are made to link personalities from our country, leaders from our country to this repugnant issue, with no respect for anyone.

See how they used the most exemplary trial ever held to turn it into a source of nasty schemes against Cuba; a trial that set an example to the world of how any manifestation, any tendency towards complicity with drug trafficking must be cut at the source.

We also struggle tirelessly against something as common throughout the world as corruption, to which no high official from the Party or the government must ever give in.

We cannot be Utopians and aspire to not having any cases of people who commit such misdeeds. Rather, we must fight tenaciously against them within the country's administrative apparatus and, of course, they will never be tolerated in a senior political or government leader. This trench must never be lost. (APPLAUSE)

Here we have a case where the State Department, which is aware of the truth about the matter and our protest at the time of the seizure in Colombia, said according to this article "that there were no links between this drug shipment and Cuban President Fidel Castro's government". It should be acknowledged that this was a State Department's objective and honest statement.

Well then, I shall continue with the wire dispatches because they really help demonstrate how the conspiracy is built up day by day. Remember that we began in late May, and now we have reached July 7.

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On July 7 itself, an AFP dispatch from Washington stated:

"Republican Senator Dan Burton introduced a bill before the US Congress on Wednesday to declare Cuba a major drug trafficking state, in light of suspicions that the island's government is an accessory to the smuggling of drugs into the United States."

An EFE dispatch posted in Washington on July 13 --this is another dispatch-- reads:

"Three US Cuban American lawmakers --two Republicans and one Democrat-- accused the United States of covering up `Castro's tyranny,' the trafficking in human beings and drugs, money laundering and a `series of illicit dealings.'

"They made these accusations because they believe that the governments of Washington and Havana are encouraging the departure of Cubans for the United States to economically benefit Castro.

"Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Lincoln Díaz-Balart, both Republicans for Florida, and Robert Menéndez, Democrat for New Jersey, expressed their annoyance with President Bill Clinton's administration for all the decisions it has adopted in favor of the Cuban government."

"The members of the US House of Representatives spoke with the press after a meeting with representatives of the State and Justice Departments and the Coast Guard Service on the latest incidents involving Cuban rafters in Florida waters.' They were meeting there with administration officials. Any time they wish, they are received with full honors and given all sorts of explanations.

The dispatch continues: "The three harshly criticized the official authorization given to a group of members of the US Chamber of Commerce to visit the island, as part of Washington's policy of promoting people-to-people contact between the United States and Cuba.

The government agreed to certain measures, a dream, some advice received from the well-known Council on Foreign Relations in New York to change its policy and do something different assuming it was easier to destroy the Revolution by other means. That is the source, it is not new; it was already set out in the Torricelli Act, lots of people-to-people contacts as if the Cuban state and government did not exist. They even subtly raised the matter of sending money, in fact, of every American buying a Cuban but since there are so many Americans and just a little more than 10 million of us, the price of Cubans will rise; there is only one for every 27 Americans.

All this is well known. There has been talk about that policy and other tactics: that the idea of suffocating the country with the blockade should be abandoned; that, on the contrary, they should influence, corrupt, alienate, destroy the Revolution from within. These are two different lines with only one objective but the peaceful one will always be preferable to the other although we know very well the aim pursued by each of them.

The mob harshly criticizes the current administration's concept of the "promotion of people-to-people contacts". They do not want anyone to visit this island. They are against migratory agreements, they are against anti-drug agreements; they are totally against any different tactic with regard to Cuba, any different initiative, no matter what the intention or the interest of the US government might be. They simply advocate the most extremist actions, the provocation of a conflict, even a war, all the more so in the last few months, encouraged by the events in Yugoslavia. They dream of seeing this country subjected to a similar operation.

The July 13 cable goes on to say: "The lawmakers suggested that to keep Castro's maneuvers in check Washington should threaten Cuba with preventing the island's access to oil and other pressures." Note the leonine or feline intentions behind the maneuvers we are unmasking here.

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"Lincoln Diaz-Balart stated that `after all, what exists between the United States and Cuba' --listen to this-- `is a convergence of interests between leftist ideologists led by White House Samuel Berger (a National Security advisor) and capitalist opportunists.'" Listen to him. He sounds like an outstanding student from the Níco López Communist Party Cadre School: "convergence of interests between leftist ideologists led by White House Samuel Berger and capitalist opportunists."

The following day, July 14, AFP reported from Washington:

"Anti-Castro Republican members of Congress warned the White House this Wednesday that all anti-drug cooperation with Cuba is in their view a violation of American law." In fact, they are almost threatening him with imprisonment.

In a letter to President Bill Clinton, Jesse Helms, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and Benjamin Gilman, chairman of the House International Relations Committee asked him to instruct US officials to cease providing air traffic information to the Cuban authorities for the purposes of anti-drug cooperation.

"Sharing such information would expose US officials to criminal liability for the shooting down of civilian planes by the Cubans", the congressmen claimed.

An intense publicity campaign was already underway.

On July 22 --note the date-- the Diario de las Américas published an article by journalist Santiago Arocha under the headline "Drug Trafficker Paid Expenses of Infiltrated Cuban Spies," which reads as follows:

"The group of people arrested in Miami by the FBI last September and accused of spying for Cuba received money from a drug trafficker sentenced by the US justice system, according to Federal Court documents from the South Florida district obtained by Diario de las Américas."

Look at how they mix up the drug-trafficking issue with a group of Cuban Americans charged of spying for Cuba a case used to create a tremendous scandal. I addressed the subject in Oporto on a long CNN interview that everybody could watch.

Now, at this precise moment, they are trying to mix the case up with the alleged financing of these citizens by a drug trafficker.

They make things up, try to mix espionage with drugs in order to create a scandal, to frighten and deceive the public and to intimidate the US government.

When they started the espionage scandal, Cuba's position was expressed clearly and objectively. As part of the current campaign, they came up with the idea of combining that episode with drug trafficking.

The article goes on:

"While accepting funds from a person sentenced for importing 150 kilos of cocaine, in their communications with Havana the agents criticized the 'United States social vices and huge distortions'".

Actually, there is nothing strange about anyone there speaking of social vices and huge distortions because those who act as if they owned the United States have turned the "Little Havana" district of Miami into Sodom and Gomorrah.

Finally --this is very important-- on July 23, three days ago, the Miami Herald published an article by well-known journalist Juan O. Tamayo under the following headline: "US plans full review of Cuban connections to illegal drug trade".

The article reads:

"The Clinton administration has ordered a top-to-bottom review of Cuba's alleged links to drug smugglers, in response to harsh attacks on its efforts to expand anti-narcotics cooperation with Havana.

The key part of the inquiry is 'an all-sources intelligence review,' a re-examination of all data on Cuba held by half-dozen agencies, from the DEA to the CIA, top administration officials said.

"The Justice Department was asked separately to review evidence gathered by a Miami federal grand jury in 1993 that nearly indicted President Fidel Castro's brother on cocaine smuggling charges, officials added." Nearly indicted! Alluding to or making any accusations in this regard against Raul, a man so well known for his integrity throughout his entire political and revolutionary life, is simply disgusting.

"State Department lawyers were also asked to reconsider whether the transit of drugs through Cuban waters and airspace is sufficient to land Cuba on the list of countries that are major transit points for the US market, the so-called 'majors list'.

"The reviews to be completed by October" --listen to that, the reviews to be completed by October-- "have frozen recent administration efforts to expand drug interdiction contacts with President Fidel Castro's government, including an unprecedented meeting held this month between US and Cuban officials.

In other words, these guys, with all their screaming and shouting, their impudence start destabilizing the government, which should know very well what it is doing and should be very well informed, extremely well informed of the truth about Cuba. It could ask some of its allies what they know for a fact about Cuba in terms of drugs.

Oh, but these people immediately put up their show and blackmail to put pressure on the man. They want him to hesitate and take any steps whether it is an investigation, a review or a reshuffling of papers. The result is that something really important for the American people must wait until at least October.

Sure, I understand. We understand all this very well because elections are involved, the ongoing politicking, concerns over the votes of this and that group, and whether they can decide a presidential election. It happens that a state like Florida has so many votes in the presidential election, so many points and it is essential to win in big states; calculations and more calculations. And this calculating begins the day politicians begin dreaming or thinking of running for president. Countless politicking interests, you could say. I cannot say political interests in this case because, in our view, politics is something more decent, more courageous and transparent. But it is not so for them. They are slaves of their own demagogy, their own methods.

In response to the shouting they say, "Calm down, we are your fairest and dearest friends", and they stop anything they are doing. They had decided to send some officials simply to explore and make the first contacts. They know what Cuba's cooperation means. They know Cuba and the Cuban people. They know them well: the only country in the world that could radically stop the one known case --in 40 years of Revolution-- when senior officials were involved in drug trafficking. They know it very well. Cuba's performance in this field is very useful to the United States, to the American people, the children, adolescents and young people who are victims of drug trafficking.

But, no! Other things are far more important for politicians: votes here or there, a nomination to the Senate or Congress, and so on. That is the truth. In other words, this article shows how these factors have put a brake on efforts aimed at cooperation.

I had predicted all of this to the congressman who came here. "It is silly not to reach a serious

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agreement for fear of the shouting in Miami!" I told him this in early June and look what happened in July.

Here is something really interesting.

On Friday, July 23, our Interests Section in Washington received an envelope from Senator Helms' office with a copy of a letter sent by him and Congressman Benjamin A. Gilman to President Bill Clinton on July 13, 1999, which reads:

"Dear Mr. President:

"We write regarding the emerging notion that it might be possible for the United States to cooperate with the Castro regime in Cuba on counter-narcotics matters.

"Mr. President, we defer to no one in our insistence that the United States exhaust all efforts to stem the tide of illegal drugs. In the case of Cuba, however, we expect that such cooperation will do little more than enable the Castro regime to divert attention from the fact that, since the early 1980s, senior officials of the Castro regime have been repeatedly accused, in US federal courts, of conspiring to smuggle cocaine into the United States.

"The purpose of this letter, however, is more specific. We have been informed by State Department and Coast Guard officials that they have routinely provided tracking data to Cuban authorities regarding suspicious aircraft heading toward Cuban territory. We understand, in fact, that these agencies have proposed the establishment of direct telephone communications with the Castro regime in order to pass this data to their Cuban counterparts more quickly.

"It appears to us, however, that such information-sharing raises serious concerns under the analysis of applicable US criminal laws set forth in the Memorandum of June 17, 1994, from Assistant Attorney General Walter Dillinger to Deputy Attorney General Jamie Gorelick."

They continue with three long pages of demagogic arguments, full of sophisms and lies, to conclude in a convoluted and threatening style:

"We will appreciate" --they tell the President-- "your review of any information sharing activities with the Castro regime and an explanation of why these activities are not prohibited under the reasoning of the Dillinger Memorandum. It is our expectation that you will instruct US officials to cease and desist from sharing such information with the Cuban regime until you have ensured that they are not exposing themselves to criminal liability by so doing."

That same day, July 23, El Nuevo Herald published a news item dealing with the review or re-examination of all intelligence sources. That newspaper published some news that it undoubtedly found out about through its relations with the counter-revolutionary Cuban mob, closely linked to the extreme right in the US Congress. It is no coincidence that on that same day, our Interests Section received an envelope with a copy of the letter that was replied only after July 20, although it had been signed and sent to Clinton on July 13.

They had obtained something: they had paralyzed the administration, which was beginning to take steps towards more efficient drug-trafficking control. Any decision in this matter was postponed several months. So, the usual thing happened, as I have already explained. Any sensible and constructive initiative by the US administration sets off the shouting, hysteria and blackmail of a mob that acts as if it owned the United States. That, of course, leads to conciliatory gestures that weaken or postpone the decision over a policy that is most correct and advisable for the interests of the United States itself.

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I have a few more things here. For instance, on June 25, one month after the Washington Post articles were published, Representative [Charles] Rangel introduced a bill that was referred to the International Relations Committee. This bill proposed "to authorize the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy to enter into negotiations with representatives of the Government of Cuba to provide for increased cooperation between Cuba and the United States on Drug interdiction efforts."

Section 1 of the bill states, among other points:

"Illegal drug abuse is a national security issue affecting every region, economic group, race and religion in the United States.

"Drug abuse-related crime is costing the United States economy at least \$5,000,000,000 per year.

"At least 30 percent of the illegal drugs that enter the United States are transported through the Caribbean region.

"The flow of illegal drugs through the Caribbean region cannot be stopped without cooperation from the Government of Cuba.

"Numerous United States law enforcement authorities have expressed the need for increased cooperation with Cuban authorities on this matter."

Hardly seven days had passed after submission of this bill when the notorious Mr. Burton, Representative for Indiana, submitted on his behalf and that of Mr. Gilman another bill proposing "to provide for the determination that Cuba is a major drug-transit country for purposes of section 490(h) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.

"Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled."

Section 1 of this bill states that "this Act may be cited as the `Cuban Drug-Trafficking Act of 1999'".

In an extremely wily, cynical and even confusing way, so much so that it seems a crafty intrigue rather than a piece of legislation, the bill sets forth an "Exception": "Subsection (a) shall not be effective if the President determines, based upon conclusive evidence, that no substantial portion of the approximately 7.2 metric tons of cocaine seized in December 3, 1998, in Cartagena, Colombia, was destined for transit to the United States either directly or indirectly through Cuba."

That same day, July 1, an ultra-conservative Representative named Smith from New Jersey --home of Torricelli, Bob Menéndez and a real Cosa Nostra headquarters-- simultaneously presented on his own behalf and that of Ms. McKinney an additional bill. This would be an amendment to the Appropriation bill authorizing the State Department funds for fiscal year 2000. He proposed adding the following amendment to the bill:

"Section 202. Report on Cuban Drug-Trafficking.

"Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act and every 180 days thereafter, the Secretary of State shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees an unclassified report (with a classified annex) on the extent of international drug trafficking from, through, or over Cuba. Each report shall include the following:

"(1) Information concerning the extent to which the Cuban Government or any official, employee, or entity of the Government of Cuba has engaged in, facilitated, or condoned such trafficking.

"(2) The extent to which the appropriate agencies of the United States Government have investigated

and prosecuted such activities of the Cuban Government or any official, employee, or entity of the Government of Cuba.

"(3) A determination of whether the Government of Cuba should be included in the list of nations considered to be major drug trafficking countries."

In summary: on June 25, New York Representative [Charles] Rangel tabled a bill favoring cooperation with Cuba on drug control on July 1, three Representatives, Burton and Gilman and Smith --all closely linked to the Cuban-American National Foundation, which provides major contributions to their election campaigns, especially to the first two-- tabled two bills, one of them as an amendment to a pressing appropriations bill. It was based on complete lies and shameful procedures and arguments and it posed gross legal obstacles to all forms of cooperation in drug control.

When the Cuban American mob's allies in Congress, experts in legal chicanery, want something to move quickly they do not introduce an independent bill, which would require long-drawn-out procedures and a great deal of time. Instead, they introduce their bills in the form of amendments to major bills that must be passed quickly. Often these bills are so very long and full of details that the members of Congress pass them without even reading them.

Now then, we will see what the government does. Anyone can see that that country is a chaos, full of contradictions. First, a constructive bill is introduced and then the mob and its allies immediately introduce two others and use the amendment mechanism as well. Rangel honorably and honestly introduces his as an independent bill; the others resort to the old discredited trick of amendments.

The review of all the crazy things they do and the analysis of the letter sent by Mr. Helms and Mr. Gilman to the president of the United States, together with the other things I have described draw a clear picture of the immorality, dishonesty and demagoguery contained in the way laws and amendments against our country find their way in the United States.

Because of its geographical location, Cuba is undoubtedly one of the most strategic points in the hemisphere for the fight against drug trafficking. The Old Bahaman Channel, given its proximity to the United States, has become a favorite area for drug smugglers to get their shipments to US coasts. Airplanes drop their cargoes on the water along this route to be picked up by speedboats with three powerful motors that can go up to 100 kilometers an hour. Similar operations are carried out between medium-sized boats and speedboats. Most of the times these speedboats elude capture, just like the ones used to smuggle aliens. As a result, there has been in recent years a boom in international drug trafficking activities in the waters of this area.

In the first half of 1999, the drug loads that washed up on Cuba's northern coast along the length of the Channel totaled 4,539 kilograms; these are the drugs that were left adrift and washed up on our coasts. This figure represents a 60% increase compared to the same time period last year, and it already exceeds in half the time, the 4,484 kilograms seized this way throughout last year. It is plain to see how this activity has increased, and how drug smugglers have chosen this area as one of their favorites in the Caribbean.

From Cayo Confites, off the north coast of Cuba, you can see the lighthouse on one of the Bahamian islands. Truly effective control of this lengthy route can only be accomplished in close cooperation with Cuba.

I have here a 41-page report, with relatively small print and single spacing, issued by the National Anti-Drug Division and the Border Guard Troop Division, which recounts the principal international drug trafficking cases recorded throughout the '90s. These 41 pages document every operation, month by month, year by year and many of them have taken place north of Cuba.

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No other country has ever done what we have done, nor with greater selflessness. That is a source of pleasure for us. This seems like a good moment --because we have invited members of the diplomatic corps to be here with us, including friends of the United States coming from Europe and other places-- to give them an idea of the sanity left to many political leaders in that country, their ethic, common sense, even the patriotism that is left to them.

Here is the evidence. These things are irrefutable and we are willing to discuss them with anyone, anywhere. There is neither other country with a greater sense of morality nor one more capable of defending its truths. (APPLAUSE) There is no other country more transparent in its actions confronting tricks, misdeeds, conspiracies, stupidity and arrogance.

Nothing about the aforementioned proposals against Cuba frightens us in the least. We would not even be frightened by the news that a meteor was headed straight for the Earth. (APPLAUSE) Our people learned a long time ago not to fear anyone or anything.

I want to conclude with the following statement:

By sabotaging an agreement between Cuba and the United States to fight the international drug trafficking --similar to the one established against the trafficking of immigrants-- Senator Helms, Representatives Burton, Gilman, and Smith and 10 or 12 other lawmakers associated with the Cuban-American National Foundation objectively become drug trafficking's greatest allies.

That is the truth. Whose interest does it hurt? Who does it harm? They are largely accountable for the hundreds of tons of various drugs that end up in the hands of millions of adolescents and young people in the United States, or people who suffer the terrible scourge of drugs. A major part of such drugs could be intercepted through serious, responsible and efficient cooperation between Cuba and the United States.

If I let myself get carried away, like they do, by frustration and stupidity I might say that they receive money from drug traffickers. Nevertheless, I calmly believe that it is demagoguery, combined with vulgar political interests and hatred for a people they have not been able to force into submission and whom they hope to destroy with their economic warfare and genocidal laws, that have led them to stoop to such despicable acts. (APPLAUSE)

McCaffrey is a professional military man who can be assumed to know something about tactics and strategy. It is not at all strange for him to react with a natural understanding that you cannot win a battle with such a vulnerable flank and your hands tied when it comes to taking action in that direction.

It is also understandable, as many intelligent people in the United States are beginning to discern, that with the destruction of the Cuban revolution and the moral values it has brought to the country --which would be impossible, in any event-- this island would become the most dangerous center of corruption, gambling, drug trafficking and crime in the world, something much worse than a political, economic and social system so despised by the extreme right in the United States.

This is a system that amidst a cruel and merciless political and economic war waged by the mightiest power that has ever existed has managed to provide the people with full independence, health care, education, culture, dignity and worldwide admiration and solidarity in its heroic struggle. (APPLAUSE) This has been demonstrated by the almost unanimous United Nations vote against the blockade on Cuba.

For the time being, the Miami mob and its most reactionary allies in Congress, with the review the administration has granted them --the results of which are known beforehand, because the institutions assigned with this unnecessary task will have to tell the truth out of an elementary sense of self-respect-- have seen to it that something as necessary, indispensable and beneficial to the US society as

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cooperation in international drug-trafficking control will be delayed several months.

It is certain that fanciful stories and unscrupulous fabrications will not deceive these professionally prestigious institutions. Throughout these 40 years there is not even a nail they can hang on to. They will have to draw their own conclusions. I do not believe the administration is going to put pressure on them because the administration is interested in doing something constructive and positive in this field that is useful for the American people.

If serious cooperation were established, we could even quantify the amount of drugs intercepted. It is the only possibility. This island is 1,200 kilometers long; it is located between the Yucatan Channel and the narrow sea separating Cuba from Haiti.

Ours is the only country from which you can actually control the international waters, and our own, south of the extensive Bahamian islands, geographically the most convenient area for drug trafficking given its proximity to the United States' coasts.

But we do not only cooperate against drug smuggling to the United States; we cooperate in the international community's fight against drug trafficking in general, in conjunction with all of the countries with which we have signed drug-drug-control agreements.

Who stand to benefit from this? Who stand to win and who stand to lose, really? We are hurt --I already said it-- when drugs are washed ashore, but we are taking measures and working with fishermen and the population, urging them to cooperate. It is a hard job but our country is organized and disciplined, and the masses always react positively. It is these mass that we are now calling upon to confront another delicate issue: a mob conspiracy to destroy the migratory agreements.

All this has an impact. We know very well what they are looking for, what they are aiming at. They are aiming at a Cuba-United States conflict. Quite simply, this is their hope, their dream, as the only way to destroy a Revolution nobody will ever be able to destroy.

Do you recall what Maceo said about those who attempt to take over Cuba? What were they going to reap? (Shouts of "The dust of its soil soaked in blood, if they do not perish in battle".)

Unpatriotic persons do not care about anything. They and those who have always supported them dream and underestimate Cuba, as has happened so many times before. They have been underestimating our country for 40 years now. They underestimated it when they thought they could destroy our morale with covert wars. They underestimated it when they thought that as soon as they landed at the Bay of Pigs, the people would revolt but there they did not put up for long, for the people themselves crushed them.

They underestimated our people when they thought that after the socialist camp collapsed and the USSR disintegrated, the Revolution would collapse as well. But here it is and with it the resolute and courageous people gathered on this July 26 to commemorate the 46th anniversary of the Moncada. (APPLAUSE)

Perhaps such a sensible and simple step as the one that the counter-revolutionary Cuban-American mob and its allies in the US Congress are trying to sabotage will yield more than a substantial part of the \$17 billion the United States spends every year in the war on drugs.

Let us hope that the 50% of US voters who do not abstain from voting can actually know about this and take it into account. Some day the US people will be fully aware of these facts.

Cuba will unshakably continue marching forward along the road paved that unforgettable July 26, 1953. (APPLAUSE)

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